wish him continued health, safety, and success.

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IN RECOGNITION OF LANDON BAILEY

HON. LAUREN UNDERWOOD

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize Landon Bailey for his service in my office in Washington, D.C.

Landon joined our office as scheduler at the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. As our office transitioned to maximum telework status in March 2020 and we learned to serve Illinois' 14th District remotely, Landon played an integral role. He enthusiastically rolled up his sleeves and demonstrated patience, perseverance, and dedication to learning a new job, integrating with a new team, and serving the people of the 14th District of Illinois, all without the benefit of ever working in a physical office environment or meeting his colleagues face-to-face. While taking on that particular challenge is an experience shared by more than a few Americans during the coronavirus pandemic, the grace, humor, and kindness with which he approached the challenge sets him apart.

During his tenure, Landon shifted our external and internal scheduling processes from a primarily in-person operation to a primarily virtual operation. He learned and taught others how to Zoom, use Teams, and participate in hearings via WebEx—and often navigate multiple virtual events simultaneously. He liaised with hundreds of constituents and made sure each of them was able to connect with our office. Without his efforts, our District would not have been as well-served during this challenging time.

Landon's collegiality, get-it-done attitude, and grace under pressure were invaluable assets as we worked to keep our community safe, healthy, and informed in this unprecedented year.

Prior to joining my staff, Landon earned a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Delaware State University, where he was a member of Iota Phi Theta Fraternity, Inc. and The Men of Color Alliance. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Public Administration from Wilmington University. I am grateful he chose to continue his career in public service by joining my office. Our office will miss his daily updates on our morning calls, his unfailing love for Delaware State University, and his ability to narrate an impromptu team-building holiday fashion show like a pro.

Madam Speaker, I would like to formally thank Landon Bailey for his service to my office, to Illinois's 14th Congressional District, and to our country.

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RECOGNIZING THE RETIREMENT OF DR. DEBRA A. DRAPER

HON. MARK TAKANO

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to honor the service of Dr. Debra A. Draper, a Director of Health Care at the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), on the occasion of her upcoming retirement. Dr. Draper spent 14 years of her career at GAO, primarily overseeing evaluations of federal health care services for veterans and military servicemembers. Dr. Draper brought with her to GAO more than 25 years of experience in health care administration, health services research, and health care consulting, as well as a Ph.D. in Health Services Organization and Research.

As she retires, Dr. Draper will leave a lasting legacy—not only at GAO, but at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and here in Congress. As Chairman of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs, I am especially grateful for the work Dr. Draper and her teams have done for this committee. As a Director at GAO, Dr. Draper has issued at least 80 written products, more than 45 of which were reports or written testimony prepared at the request or mandate of the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs. Dr. Draper and her teams have made hundreds of recommendations to improve the delivery of health care services to our nation's veterans, the majority of which have been implemented.

Since 2010, Dr. Draper has testified at 12 hearings convened by the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs or its Subcommittees. She has been a trusted voice and provided meaningful insights on numerous issues within the Committee's jurisdiction. However, Dr. Draper's most significant contributions as a hearing witness have been on the topic of veterans' wait times for appointments at VA medical facilities, an issue that captured nationwide media attention in 2014. Dr. Draper's testimony and subsequent reports on this topic has been invaluable to helping the Committee understand VA's appointment scheduling processes and the lack of transparency in VA's reported wait times. Dr. Draper's body of work will continue to guide the Committee's oversight in this area, even after her retirement.

In 2015, GAO added VA health care to its biennial High Risk List, which focuses attention on federal programs and government operations that are most vulnerable to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. In designating VA health care as a high-risk area, GAO identified five areas of concern: (1) ambiguous policies and inconsistent processes; (2) inadequate oversight and accountability; (3) information technology challenges; (4) inadequate training for VA staff; and (5) unclear resource needs and allocation priorities. Since 2015, amid significant leadership instability at VA, Dr. Draper has diligently monitored the Department's response to GAO's high-risk designation, engaging in countless meetings with VA officials and providing ongoing feedback on the Department's plans for addressing GAO's five areas of concern. While VA still has a significant amount of work to do to meet GAO's criteria for removal from the High Risk List, Dr. Draper has established a solid foundation for evaluating VA's future progress.

Please join me in thanking Dr. Draper for her many years of dedicated GAO service, which will have a lasting impact on veterans, VA, and the Congress. Throughout her time at GAO, she has been a highly respected leader, supervisor, mentor, and colleague, and she will undoubtedly be missed by those who have worked closely with her. My House Committee on Veterans' Affairs colleagues and I, and our staffs, congratulate her and wish her well in her richly deserved retirement.

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H.R. 210, RURAL STEM EDUCATION RESEARCH ACT

HON. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

Ms. JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I was proud to join Ranking Member Lucas in introducing his Rural STEM Education Research Act. Access to high-quality STEM education has too long been place-based. For students who grow up in rural areas of this country, even in states that boast some of the world's best research universities, a STEM career may seem unattainable. Many rural students have never met a practicing scientist or engineer. Their teachers often struggle with limited resources for the STEM curriculum. It is unlikely that their schools have well equipped science laboratories that may provide hands-on experiences that are known to inspire scientific curiosity and a love of STEM at an early age. The nearest science museum may be too far for a field trip, if the district can even afford to transport them. And broadband access remains an urgent challenge.

Yet we know with certainty that talent for science has nothing to do with one where is born, any more than it has to do with the color of one's skin or one's gender. Our country is filled with smart young people from all backgrounds who may one day contribute to our science and innovation leadership. In fact, we need them to contribute to our science and innovation future if we are to continue to compete on the global stage and develop solutions to our most pressing challenges. But these young people must first see it as a possibility for themselves, and that starts with access to high-quality STEM education and hands-on research experiences in their local schools.

The Rural STEM Education Act provides for research and development to increase access to STEM education opportunities in rural schools and to provide teachers with the resources they need to teach more effectively. The bill also directs the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) to develop a prize competition to advance research and development of creative technologies for expanded broadband access. This bill further provides for assessments of Federal investments in rural STEM education to be conducted by the National Academies and the Government Accountability Office.

H.R. 210 is a good, bipartisan bill. I am pleased that the House passed it today along with a series of other bills focused on growing, diversifying, and strengthening our STEM workforce for the future. I look forward to working with Ranking Member Lucas and colleagues in both bodies to enact all of these bills.